# Gossip

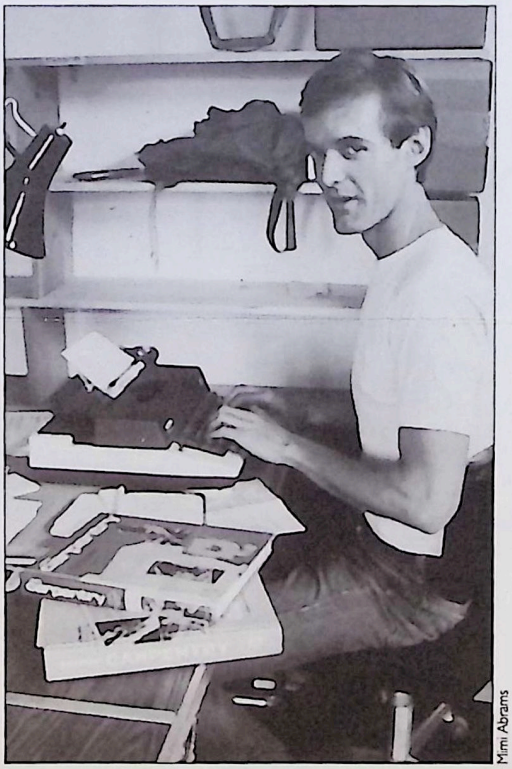
SURE IS QUIET around here. Maybe we should have these sabbaticals more often. Where is everybody?

In early May, David, Liz, Winslow, Leslie, and assorted friends took advantage of their freedom and canoed Utah's Green River, with regular *WER* contributor Craig Childs serving as their native guide. All returned tan, happy, and full of canyons, hidden Anasazi ruins, and fullmoonlight.

Winslow Colwell

**Relaxing times on the Green River**

Though he was a professional river-runner, our longtime friend and colleague, Richard Nilsen was not with them. He died that same week of AIDS, after five years of grim, but spirited, struggle. Richard was an integral part of the fabric of *WER* and the *Whole Earth Catalog,* having been an editor and contributor for more than 20 years. Richard looked, moved, and thought like a man who spent a lot of his life outdoors, paying attention. In addition to his sensitive editing, he left us many inspired articles, a path-showing book, *Helping Nature Heal*, and a gaggle of writers much improved by his encouragement and patient tutoring. On June 1, Whole Earth folks shared smiles and tears with Richard's family and friends at a celebration of his life, in the midst of the redwoods of west Marin. A true teacher. He's missed.



Mimi Abrams

**Richard Nilsen**

Our valiant editor, Ruth Kissane is off to chat with the ghosts of her ancestors in Ireland. Just back from doing a bit of painting in New Orleans, our multi-talented Senior Editor, James Donnelly is lookin' for something interesting to do in the Bay Area.

Pixel farmer Winslow Colwell is helping Stewart Brand's wife, former CoEvolutionary Patty Phelan, put a Web-based consumer-oriented health and medical library on line (sort of a supercharged version of Planetree, the nonprofit Patty helped start). The result, Direct Medical Knowledge, will be provided to members of several managed-care organizations, and later to the public. Hasci Horvath, ex-*WER* jack of all trades, has been on Patty's crew for about a year.

"Dr. Tom" Ferguson, our medical editor since the dark ages, is also putting medical knowledge back into our hands. Check his *Health Online* (Addison-Wesley) for access to virtual self-help communities, support groups and other health information. He's taken special care to remove the mystery and fear from finding what you need in cyberspace. Even the computer-adroitae might be amazed at what's available.

Lemme see . . . Kathleen O'Neill is doing contract graphics, and has just finished design work on *Farmer to Farmer*, the innovative sustainable ag-

# Dave Smith

*is co-founder and past president of Smith & Hawken, the garden tool company. As one of the originators of the Briarpatch Cooperative Market network, he served on the Board of Directors of the original Whole Earth Truck Store. He is the new CEO of* Medical Self-Care.

Of the millions who marched for peace, registered black voters, burned draft cards, boycotted grapes, and sang "we shall overcome some day" back then, who is still out there every day trying to overcome?

Let me tell you about one I know, my friend John Jeavons. John's passion is researching and teaching biointensive gardening methods so that hungry, third-world people can feed themselves and lead more food-secure, independent, fulfilling lives. He's been doing it for 16 years. In order to be true to his cause, he feels that it is necessary to live on less, and works toward surviving on the same income as the average third-world peasant. His work will become crucial here in the U.S. as modern agricultural methods lose their viability. His organization is called Ecology Action. It's a small, beautiful group of people with profound international impact.

One of the things John does best is to "stick to his knitting." He is out in the research garden most mornings and evenings doing the watering, checking on the plants . . . and with the help of family and a few volunteers, continues to chip away at sustainability problems as he finds ways of increasing the yields and reducing the space necessary to grow food and fuel. What I admire most in this man is his utter honesty and personal integrity. I've seen many of our so-called "counter-culture heroes" succumb to the fatal errors of hubris and ego. John doggedly plods along, with little fanfare, on his personal, selfless path of helping others.

Our culture does not provide the stages-of-life mythology that some Eastern spiritual disciplines offer. Even though we boomers should feel okay that we are in that stage of our lives that is providing support for our families and their security, we are still ridden with guilt by our affluence. The impersonal methods of giving to others or supporting environmental causes provided by large non-profits such as United Way or Sierra Club just does not provide the psychic relief, the community spirit, or the exuberance that marching on the ROTC building or working at the food conspiracy did.

My feeling is that the nineties are going to be a time of crises and renewed idealism. I think that the organizing skills and the need for community we fondly remember from our youth are going to come in handy when it all hits the fan again. We need to be prepared.

We don't need any more national organizations. We have plenty. We must nurture the small, regional, struggling outposts and those individuals who are both the remnants of our past and the vanguards of survival and spirit that will get us through the nineties. They are like the snail-darter and other tiny, obscure, anachronistic, local species of our environment that are about to be lost forever if they are not preserved and nurtured. You know who they are: recyclers, peaceniks, community gardeners, activists, politicos, community organizers, market farmers, farm workers, environmentalists, teachers, catholic workers, simple livers, etc. They're still there struggling, still full of hope, making a difference, living out our ideals.

I have a suggestion. For want of a more well-thought-out, catchy phrase, I will call this idea Adopt-A-Care. Sounds corporate and corny. Oh, well. The pundits say we boomers are about to step into power. Let's use our power within the corporations and companies that most of us are part of to Adopt-A-Care. Let's take 2 percent of pre-tax profits and save what's left of our eroded idealistic environment by investing in a local cause. But let's make it much more than just giving money. When we Adopt-A-Care, let's create a relationship between the company and the cause within the bounds of appropriate time budgets, and with agreements that won't disrupt or distract from the main goals of our companies. Let's invite the cause and its organizers to address our employees and to recruit volunteers. Let's post their pictures on the lunchroom bulletin boards and let them use our copiers, our desktop publishing, our mailing machines. Let's train them in direct mail methods and newsletter layouts. Let's profile them in company newsletters and invite them to company picnics. Let's help them professionalize their act. In turn, we will excite and involve our employees. Such companies will attract the cream of the workforce because the best employees are people who care, and people who care are concerned with more than just taking a paycheck home.

Adopt-A-Care is not a new, formal organization . . . just an idea. I'm going to ask my company and its employees to do "One For John" . . . 1 percent of profits for John Jeavons and Ecology Action. Then I will propose we do the same for another group with another 1 percent, and then bring them both into the company to help them and to learn from them.

Adopt a care . . . a small, beautiful, local care. And let's hear one for John. ■